

FISH& WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 16, 2014

Agenda Item: 2015 Fishing Regulations

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

The F&W Commission has authority to make changes to FWP fishing regulations. The process for reviewing and amending fishing regulations is based on a four-year cycle. The first year of each cycle is dedicated to actively soliciting ideas for changes from the public. During the following three years of the cycle (“off-cycle” years), ideas are only solicited internally from FWP biologists, fish managers and enforcement personnel. Regulation changes are proposed to the Commission during off-cycle years only if they meet certain criteria: achieve enforcement needs, provide clarification, are important for species conservation, are removing regulations no longer relevant, or fulfill direction provided in management plans. 2015 is an off-cycle year; the next year with full public involvement will be 2016.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP conducted a 30-day public comment period on the proposed fishing regulations from Aug. 13-Sept. 12. Only one comment was received, and it expressed support for the proposed change to the perch bag limit on Holter Reservoir.

Alternatives and Analysis

The proposed regulation changes for 2015 list each proposal individually and indicate if they are a new regulation or a change to or deletion of an existing regulation. A summary of the public comments received is then provided for each proposed change, followed by the FWP response and rationale.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

While the public only provided one comment on these proposals, there are other considerations associated with each proposal that lead FWP to continue to propose these regulations for final approval. The liberalization of the Holter perch bag limit is also a prescribed change listed in the Upper Missouri River Reservoirs Fisheries Management Plan (UMRRFMP) when perch populations become abundant and exceed certain gill net catch rates. The walleye bag limit proposal change for the Missouri River was inadvertently left out of the 2014 regulation changes, and should have accompanied the bag limit change that was made for Canyon Ferry Reservoir. This is to be consistent with the UMRRFMP which speaks to the need for consistent fishing regulations in the river and reservoir for walleye. Lastly, the bag limit waiver and allowance of spearing proposal for northern pike on Lake Mary Ronan is one of the management tools used to respond to illegal fish introductions, as described in the new ARM rule on “Unauthorized Placement of Fish into the Public Waters.”

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt FWP’s proposed final regulation changes for the 2015 fishing season.